

# THE PRACTICE



## Chapter 10

### THE “THOUGHT-PRODUCER”

#### I. INTRODUCTION

Here we will explore some meditative techniques that can help us cultivate the state of *manas taijasa* [the illumined mind – talked about in chapter 8]. ... It must be kept in mind that any technique of meditation is mainly an aid to *discover* a particular state. The actual assimilation of it requires the additional effort on the part of the aspirant to position himself in that state during his day. (p. 147)

#### II. SEEKING THE THOUGHT-PRODUCER

##### Words to Know

dhāranā – the practice of meditation when the mind is firmly concentrated on the chosen object, there may still be a struggle to keep the attention focused – here I am focusing on a rock and my mind may waver in and out of focus; undisturbed concentration is the goal or end product.

dhyāna – a state in the process of meditation where the attention flows uninterruptedly and effortlessly to the object of meditation – here my mind is focused attentively on the rock without distraction; however, there is awareness of me and the rock—still a state of duality.

samādhi – the highest state of yoga in which the meditator becomes one with the object of meditation – here there is awareness only of the rock – I am not separate from the rock – a unitive state \*(now, remember that just as with most principles – there are various levels of *samādhi*)

##### Questions for Discussion

1. In order to listen to the spiritual voice, we need to \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_ the source of illusion ... which is what? (p. 147)
2. The first requisite to embark on this inner quest is, what? And that is to attain a certain level of what? (p. 147)
3. We have to be free from [external] distractions caused by \_\_\_\_\_, called what? And from internal distraction caused by, what? or reactions to, what? Which is the state of \_\_\_\_\_? (p. 148)
4. Artificial intelligence is a perfect example of what? (p. 149)
5. The main difference between personal intelligence and that of a computer is that the latter does not have, what? In consequence, the process of artificial intelligence does not develop, what? (p. 149)
6. Explain what Blavatsky called “the mystery of the ego.” And for this reason, in the Theosophical teachings, lower *manas* is not seen merely as a \_\_\_\_\_, but as a \_\_\_\_\_ that has a degree of freedom and responsibility for its actions. (p.150)

##### Points to Ponder

“Theosophical teachings (along with many other serious spiritual traditions) postulate that the existence of a psychological thinker as an independent entity is an illusion.” (p. 148)

“Most of us have the strong impression that we are the thought-producing entities that interpret what comes through the senses, make decisions, and shape our lives.” (p. 148)

“As we have seen, the sense-thought is a highly mechanical and conditioned process ... heavily influenced by *kāma* – the passionate nature. It is the center of reaction ... based on principles of self-preservation, pleasure-seeking/pain-avoiding, etc.” (p. 149)

“Thus, although it is obvious that a process of thinking and choosing takes place in the mental field, this does not imply that there is a real entity behind it ... .” (p. 149)

“Perhaps it would be helpful to think of the mental field (lower mental plane) as a dimension in which all incoming influences are “translated” as thought. Thus, when kāmic elements such as fear, desire, etc. stimulate the mental sphere, the response is self-centered thinking. In a similar manner, when the higher ego sends its influence to the lower mental Principle, this is translated into a type of “inspired” higher thinking. However, in neither case are the production of thoughts the result of a psychological entity, but rather a process of receiving and organizing data.”

\*Use the diagram on page 150 to illustrate this above concept. (pp. 149-50)

### III. MEDITATIVE SELF-INQUIRY

#### Points to Ponder

In search of that element within our being which is permanent and essential ...

“In order to hear the still small voice of our spiritual nature, the false idea about the existence of a personal self, and the subsequent identification with it, needs to be recognized and transcended. One method to move in this direction is to engage in a thorough self-investigation, trying to find the thought-producer “I”. (p. 150)

“What is the element in our mind that produces our sense of identity? Memory plays a role. Memory ties all past experience to the present, giving continuity to the sense that I am the same entity during different stages of life.” (p. 153)

“Some people may be tempted to say that the permanent element is the soul. That may be true, but it does not help in our inquiry. The soul is not personal. It is an impersonal Individuality.” (p. 153)

#### Exercises to Explore

##### *The permanent element*

One of the features of the psychological “I” is the sense of continuity that persists throughout life, in spite of the changes that take place during the years. (pp. 151-53)

Start at the level of the physical body and its sensations. Reflect on the fact that our bodies change over time, the ones we have now being completely different from the bodies we had when we were born. ... Visualize the body as a collection of little luminous balls forming the shape of the body. These little balls are constantly moving, entering and exiting the body so that, after a while, all the original balls are replaced (and continue to be replaced) by new ones.

Our emotions and desires are also constantly changing. There is in us a continuous play of different emotions and feelings, appearing and disappearing.

If we examine our thoughts and ideas, we can observe the same thing – they are in constant change (even though there may be some tendencies or habits of thought) and yet our sense of identity remains.

Thus, when we try to find out whether there is a permanent element within our thoughts, emotions and body, we see that everything within us is in constant flux.

##### *The essential element*

In this self-inquiry we will try to identify the essential element that makes each one of us ourselves – that something without which I would not be, without which I would cease to exist as “I”.

To be able to follow this approach we need to understand the difference between an *essence* and its *attributes*. ... The essence is a property something *must* have for it to be what it is. [Discuss examples.] An attribute is an accidental property, that is, a quality that can be changed or removed without the object losing its identity. [Discuss examples.] (pp. 153-55)

Again, let us start from the body. Does our name and form constitute our essential identity? What if we alter our height, our skin color, the shape of our face – would we cease to be ourselves? Is there any element in the body that can constitute our essence? Would we cease to exist if we replace our hearts with a mechanical pump? What about the brain? The brain may be very important for the “I” to express itself on the physical plane, but even if the brain stops working (as in near-death experiences), we can still be conscious and feel we are ourselves.

Let us turn our attention to the emotional field. Would we cease to exist if we had different emotions or if we were to lack any of them? ... Even at a time when we may not be feeling any emotion whatsoever, do we disappear? We don’t, so the essence of the “I” must be beyond the emotional field.

The realm of sense-thought ... here again, is there any idea or thought without which we would cease to be? ... What about memory? Without memory we would not know who we are ... but would we cease to be? ... A person may not know *who* he is, but he knows *that he is*.

From this inquiry we can see that there is nothing within the *personal aspect* of our nature that we can say this is the essence of “I.” Even though from a logical point of view of our lower mind, these questions can be easily answered; when done with a quiet, meditative mind, this reality permeates more than the thinking brain and prepares our nature to perceive *the sense of being*.

#### IV. THE SENSE OF BEING

... there is a deeper *sense of being* that is always present. This obscure, abstract, and unformulated sense of being is a non-conceptual knowledge or intuition – a feeling of *I-ness* – that is present even when there are no thoughts or words to define it.

##### Questions to Discuss

1. Blavatsky states that none of our changing experiences are the source of our *I-ness*. The pure sense of being comes from, what? (p. 156)
2. It is clear that I can experience silence on an individual basis, but while my body, emotions, and thoughts have my uniqueness, can I say the same about silence? ... What is silence? (p. 156)
3. Therefore, the bare sense of being is, what? (p. 156)
4. We have not found any personal element that is essential or remains always the same [permanent]. ... If this is true, why do I feel – “I am John Smith” and she feels she is Mrs. Brown? ... This is simply the result of a phenomenon related to, what? And the identification of what? Give an example of how this is so. (p. 157)
5. As in ... reproducing in ourselves the feelings that the actors [in a movie we are watching] are conveying. In a similar way, the pure sense of being “forgets” ... what? (p. 157)
6. This is the result of the confusion between, what? (p. 157)
7. Use the diagram on page 159 to summarize these inquiries. (pp.158-59)

##### Points to Ponder

“As we have seen, *nowhere within our personal* features can we find an essential or permanent “I”. ... But, there is a quiet *sense of being* “behind” the personal attributes. ... According to Blavatsky, the different experiences we go through (actions, feeling, thought, etc.) ‘produce the feeling of egoity [or *I-ness*] only while they last.’ ... Our sense of being this or that is constantly changing along with whatever is present in consciousness at the moment. But the one invariable common factor, remaining the same during every conscious moment throughout our lives, is the simple feeling of ‘I am.’” (pp. 155-56)

“The *true* self is, *per se*, impersonal; the personal or brain-consciousness being but an illusory reflection in incarnated existence.’ (CW, v8, p. 96) In the silence where personal thought, emotions, and sensations are absent, one is not aware of being Mr. Smith or Mrs. Brown. These distinctions come with thinking and memory. From this, it is clear that the silent and *impersonal* feeling of ‘I am I’ cannot be the *personal* ego we are looking for.” (p. 157)

“We have not found any *personal* element that is essential or remains always the same. Our true being, therefore, is none of the passing sensations, emotions and thoughts, but the lasting, stable, and poised sense of just *being*, beyond any sense of separation.” (p. 157)

## Exercises to Explore

When the impersonal and simple feeling of “I am” identifies with the personal vehicles of consciousness (with thoughts, emotions, name and form) we say: “I am—John Smith” and the pure sense of *being* is turned into the sense of *identity*. It is this phenomenon of identification, supported by the faculty of memory, that creates an illusory center—the personal ego—with apparent continuity.

As an exercise ... we are encouraged to switch from the idea “I am the one that acts, feels, and thinks” to “I am the witness of the actions, feelings, and thoughts called Mr. Smith.”

Only the impersonal is real, while the personal states appear and disappear in the field of consciousness. To be identified with the person is to be dragged into a restless and void existence. Only the stability of the impersonal can ever bring peace. (pp. 157-58)

## V. DWELLING IN THE SENSE OF BEING

### Points to Ponder

“An important aspect of the spiritual practice is the endeavor to: (a) identify the true sense of being, and (b) dwell in it.

Our inquiry should not be a mere intellectual analysis repeating learned concepts. It should be a true investigation with a genuine effort at trying to *find out* or discover.

We must also remember that truly “spiritual” methods should eventually lead us beyond any thinking or inquiry, which are still activities in the realm of thought.” (p. 159)

### Exercises to Explore

A. After we examine and leave behind the impermanent sensations, emotions, thoughts and memories, we should try to remain aware in the silence that is left—even if for a few seconds. At the beginning of the practice, the state of silence may appear as one of darkness—mere void and negation. But as we dwell in it, we will start perceiving this pure sense of being, more and more clearly. Once this feeling is identified and “stabilized” in awareness, we will be able to perceive it at any moment, even in the midst of actions, sensations, emotions and thoughts. This effort will be greatly helped by the attempt to cultivate a state of self-observation in daily life.

Sit completely relaxed—physically, emotionally and mentally—and rest in that sense of being, of existing. ... just sit and be—fully aware. ... not with an idle attitude ... with a clear awareness always present.

Difficulties – (1) Generating a passive “mediumistic” mind ... for this, shorter sessions of sitting may be more appropriate. (2) Becoming distracted by the movement of thoughts and feelings; and engaging in the distraction or a struggle to fight it ... when this happens, just notice the distraction and come back to the feeling of *I-am-ness*, without trying to manipulate things. With practice, the “correct positioning” of our awareness will be found, where there is neither struggle nor distraction nor dullness. (pp. 159-60)

B. A repeat from chapter 6: An intermediate approach between the direct attempt at dwelling in the sense of being and the full self-inquiry. ... it is based on the question “*Who am I?*” ... Ramana Maharshi, explained:

When other thoughts arise, one should not pursue them, but should inquire: “To whom do they arise?” ... The answer that would emerge would be “To me.” Thereupon if one inquires “Who am I?” the mind will go back to its source; and the thought that arose will become quiescent. With repeated practice in this manner, the mind will develop the skill to stay in its source. (*The Spiritual Teaching of Ramana Maharshi*, p. 5)

When asking the question “Who am I?” we should not engage in any kind of analysis or attempt at answering it. We should just look inside and dwell in the feeling of “I am I,” remaining there in silent awareness until another thought arises, at which time we repeat the inquiry. “Who am I?” not “Who is the thinker?” ... the latter is dualistic and allows one part of the mind to assume the role of an entity looking at the other parts as if they were separate from it. (pp. 160-61)

### Further Reading

*Some Interesting Aspects on Meditation* by I. K. Taimni

<https://www.theosophical.org/files/resources/articles/InterestingAspectsMeditation.pdf>